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Imbolg Ritual

Dorothy Morrison (http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Olympus/8774)

Two women are selected to represent the Maiden and the Crone. the Priestess will represent the Mother.

The members of the group should bring with them the candles which they will use for the year for blessing.

The altar is at the Northeast and is covered with a white cloth. Evergreens are used as decoration. A basket filled with tiny bundles of straw or wheat rests on the altar [there should be one bundle for every person participating in the ritual], as well as two (2) white candles. A black ribbon at least twelve (12) inches in length is placed in the basket. A single white flower tied with a white ribbon (to symbolize Bride) and the wand rest together in front of the altar. Four (4) white candles stand between the quarter candles. The cauldron is placed at the South, and a white candle is situated inside. A dark colored scarf or shawl (for the Crone) and a bouquet of flowers (for the Maiden) are on the altar, as well as a single white taper (for the Mother).

Full Circle is cast.

The two women prepare "Bride's Bed." The MAIDEN and the CRONE pick up the flower and the wand respectively, and take them to the center of the Circle. They place the flower and the wand side by side in the center of the Circle, with the heads toward the altar. They place the altar candles on either side of the "bed" and light the candles.

The two women and the Priestess stand around the bed and say together three times:

> The Maiden comes to bring us light!
> The Winter dies, and all is bright!
> The frozen ground shall disappear -
> And all shall sprout, for Spring is near!

The Priestess now summons the two women, and the three of them stand in front of the altar, assuming their Triple-Goddess roles. The MAIDEN kisses the Priestess (MOTHER) on both cheeks and hands her a white candle. The CRONE lights the MOTHER's taper. The CRONE stands to her left. The MAIDEN drapes the shawl over the CRONE'S

head and shoulders. The MAID stands to the MOTHER'S right and picks up the bouquet of flowers. The PRIESTESS says:

> Behold the three-fold Goddess;
> Maiden, Mother, and Crone;
> She is one - yet She is three
> Together and Alone
> Summer comes not - without Spring
> Without Summer, comes no Winter chill;
> Without the Winter, Spring isn't born
> The Three, life's cycles, fulfill!

The Charge of the Goddess is then recited. After the recitation is finished the Priestess says:

> Now let us celebrate Imbolc!

The MAIDEN picks up the besom and makes her way SLOWLY deosil around the inside edges Circle, ritually sweeping it clear of all that which is old, useless and unnecessary. MOTHER and CRONE walk behind her in stately procession. While sweeping, the MAID says:

> With this besom filled with power
> Sweep away the old and sour
> Sweep away the chill of death
> As Winter draws its last cold breath
> Round, round, round about
> Sweep the old and useless out!

The Maiden replaces the besom and the women resume their places in front of the altar. The MAIDEN picks up the basket of straw bundles and presents each member of the group with one. The CRONE goes to the South, kneels before the cauldron and lights the candle inside. She explains to the group that the bundles of straw which they have been given are symbolic of Winter and Death, but also that any negativity with which they are charged will be burned along with it. A few moments of silence are allowed so that each person may charge their bundle with their own negative thoughts, habits and shortcomings. The CRONE then collects the bundles, walking widdershins. She then ties the bundles together with the black ribbon, lights the "community straw man" and places him in the cauldron to burn, saying:

Thus we melt the Winter!
And warm the breath of Spring!
We bid adieu to what is dead,
And greet each living thing.
Thus we banish Winter!
Thus we welcome Spring!

The Rite of Cakes and Wine is appropriate at this time. All members have libation, sit and relax and visit amongst themselves.

When libation is finished, the MAIDEN collects candles from the coveners to be blessed for use during the coming year, placing them in a basket. The basket is placed on the altar. The PRIESTESS says:

I bless thee creatures of wax and light
Casting out all negativity
Serve your purpose, flaming bright
Infused with magic, you shall be

Instruments of light and strength
Wick and wax though you may be
I give you life of needed length
To aid in creativity!

In the Names of the Lord and Lady, so mote it be!

The candles are then redistributed to the coven members. The Priestess says:

As we close this celebration of Imbolg, let each of us find joy in the power of the returning Sun! As each new day dawns and the light of day becomes brighter and stronger, remember that your inner light should burn as brightly. Feel the changes in the earth around you, as the chill of Winter recedes and all sprouts in the greeness of fresh, new life. Remember the wonder you felt as you awakened from Maidenhood to Womanhood - from Boyhood to Manhood. Relive the joy of that awakening and heal any emotional scars you may have! Breathe deeply of the harmony of the Earth's new life and rejoice in your own!

> Dearest Bride, Maiden of all that is fresh and new, we warmly thank you for attending our Rite of Imbolc. As this Circle is dissolved, we ask that you guide us in our new beginnings and inspire us with the fresh creativity that you bring to all life.

Routine dissolution.

Outdoor libation to the Lord and Lady.

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